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Hei

Daniel Biegelson

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HEI

Daniel Biegelson

Let me speak of the splendor of Your power and Your wondrous deeds.

*we walked into the trees / Afraid, letting our syllables be soft / For fear of waking
the rooks... / That, then, is loveliness, we said, / Children in wonder watching the
stars, / Is the aim and the end.*

—Dylan Thomas

‘Does the daylight astonish.’ Does the orange. Does the navel.

The chromosome. The absence of silence. Who asks.

Who asks for wonder. Please. Permit me

to open my chipped beak. To sing. To signal. To send

sugar through to the suffering. A pair

of raptors seemingly confront

a parapet of smaller sparrows

all perched on the limb of a ghost tree.

A trick of light. Elusive needles the color of bone. Barely

discernible in the shift of morning

sun as the roots of each tree

tangle and reach out to one other.

//

Once we—the we that was and is dying

more rapidly

of natural/unnatural causes

day by day—called you

the chicken hawk for your great and terrible deeds

of expanse and plunder.

So. *Here I am. Hineni.* Without refrain. Praying
for contravention. In the morning.
In the early evening
the crows on the peeling
sycamore recognize us. If there is enough light.
Left. Just at the stretch of the tree. For them.
You understand. Not the same
for you and me. A hallowed/hollowed
out yellow. A drape of gold.

I want to wear. To go walking as one of your creatures.

//

Dear Affection.

I have for you a garment. To increase
the delicate atmosphere of your body.
Yours & mine.
A part of the sieged biome.

Dear Affliction. For a long time I did not know how
to write out of sickness. Physical illness.
Recoil. Pain no pitted viper would visit upon a viper.
So constant. So complete. I can't recall
my body before. The pleasure of pleasure and the pleasure
of forgetting the body altogether. Or the tenor
of conversations
in midstream. Failure of form.
Now guilty of gilding the snake. Converting our exchange
into a river. Which flows.

And yet. I am t/here still building with sand and straw
in my nose and mouth. Eyes and ears. Still
on the rhythm of the Nile's floodwaters.
Still lightly pulling up the tussled covers over your sweet sleeping body.
Grasping for patience. Begging. Bartering. Mourning.
No cool shadow from these leaves.

Instead. Exposed. Kept alive 'but to what purpose'
by my root-mates. On the precipice.

//

On the precipice of losing the light. The sparrows.
The chicken hawks. The american crows. But at times
I think 'Let all who are hungry
come and eat.' Not simply. Locusts.
We bundle tightly—how else—against the burning cold. We wear
our thoughts. Our speech. Our actions. A body
consists of its being. Plus time. In time. I have lost the sense
that I am one with my skin. So. Compelled. We must
do. Then understand. Who ripped whom from their hinges.
So. I critique myself on graph paper
and singe/sign myself an encaustic
and what I own you will own. So we are we.
Gently. With glitches. The 'owners
of a 21st century mind'
of mirrors and confection. Mixed and allotted metaphors.
Brainiac and Mysterio. Confetti
of canopied light. And all around our 'companions
are falling' without wings
thinking you do not see
the roots of our design. The materials. Or our desire.

//

Where is it written people of the people before
that you should be happy all the time. Sympathy
is in the dictionary. Said my two east borough
grandmothers. Respectfully. The eleventh commandment.
But yesterday I read an old folktale
to my round children
about an impoverished panda bear from a small village
who catches a raccoon

breaking and entering and offers
 the confused bandit his only coat. Worn as it is. Then sits
 unknowingly beneath an saw-whet
 in a cedar tree. On the hillside. Tufts of dark
 grass. Darkened. Beneath the milk moon. Eluding
 the brain's visual processing. And my children
 beneath a pillar of cloud and sky do not ask
 about nakedness. Later they struggle
 out of their clothes to run through the sprinkler.

I wish I could keep this day in my pocket.

 My daughter pronounces. *My bucket*
 is full. What does the angel

of history see
 in the backyard
 with blackened
 feathers tightly
 wrapped around
 their body
 back turned
 to the charred future
 eyes staring into
 the alleyway
 'in which shine
 the broken
 pieces of a green
 bottle'
 where at nightfall
 its curtains
 and an orange tabby
 drinks from a puddle
 with its red
 papillae tongue.
 Why is the angel
 of death so easily
 confused. We
 have secret names.
 Cells. Taxonomy.
 Fingerprints. Our
 own gait. Footfalls

crunch on gravel.
 Crackle. 'Echo in
 the memory.' Distinct
 from the opalescent
 grackle. And even
 the crows know.
 What is due.
 Comes due.

//

Due. Dewdrops on frosted grass blades. In early morning. Out
 by the woodpile. Blood. Too.
 The unreal real skein of intestines. The bright unreal
 real red. Of a possum or a raccoon or a house cat.
 Perhaps. Impossible for the laymen to tell. Imagine.
 Imagine an unending psalm.
 Due. When we condense. The lungs expand.

I confess. I found the world. I said. Intact
 with coastlines / glaciers / coral reefs / rainforests.

I found you. I said. Obsessed
 with 'the shape / the label / the labor / the color / the shade'
 of our inadequacy. Our incompetency.

Breath. Breath through your nose. And now
 guilty—as I am—of life. Of painting myself
 to see myself. Of letting the heated wax drip
 burn my skin cool and harden.
 An attempt to connect my thoughts. My speech. My actions. To you.
 But of course I wander off course in your wonder.
 Perhaps. Too close for you to see. The answer.
 Embarrassed. Over what is common. Our common root(s).
 Our children turn into us. Convert us into us.
 One form into another.

DANIEL BIEGELSON is the author of the forthcoming book *Of Being Neighbors* (Ricochet Editions) and the chapbook *Only the Borrowed Light* (VERSE). He currently serves as Director of the Visiting Writers Series at Northwest Missouri State University as well as an editor for *The Laurel Review*. His poems have appeared in or are forthcoming from *Denver Quarterly*, *FIELD*, *Interim*, *RHINO Poetry*, *Timber*, *TYPO*, and *Zone 3* among other places.